AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 12, line 12 as follows:

Referring now to **Fig. 1**, a schematic of a prior art PC metering system, generally designated **10**, is shown as an example of a mail generation system that creates and prints a mark **12** on mail item **14** in accordance with the present invention. In accordance with the present invention, mark **12** may include a two-dimensional bar code that contains conventional IBIP information, includes first handling postal authority indicator, value-added services information, such as confirmation notification information, and a mailer identity information. PC meter **10** includes conventional PC **16**, display **18** and printer **1020**. See U.S. Patent No. 5,781,438, assigned to the assignee of this application, which is hereby incorporated by reference for a more detailed description of a PC metering system.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 5 as follows:

The final handling postal authority distribution network **205** includes conventional components such as: facer/canceller **210**; MLOCR (multi-line optical character reader) sorters **220** that typically perform a primary sort for mail items that have not been presorted; intermediate bar-code sorters **230**; postal transport means **240** for transporting the mail item from one postal facility to another; final bar code sorters **250**; and delivery means **260**, such as a mail carrier delivery to a mailbox. Delivery means **260** includes a scanner **262** for scanning mark **12** at the time of delivery. In accordance with the present invention, final handling postal authority distribution network **205** further includes a digital data capture scanner and processing computer system **270** that is optionally coupled to one or more of the aforementioned components of the final handling postal authority distribution network **205** for the purpose of capturing and processing information, including value-added services information, that is read from the mark of the mail item being processed. As information is captured

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by digital data capture scanner and processing computer system **270**, a mail item file **280** (described in detail below) is created. Final handling postal authority distribution network **205** determines the electronic address of first handling postal authority distribution network **105** from either a direct scanning of mark **12** of the mailpiece **14** or, preferably, by scanning mark **12** of mailpiece **14** for the first handling postal authority distribution network **105** identity and using database **290** for determining first handling postal authority distribution network **105** electronic address. If database **290** is implemented, changes in addresses may be made efficiently because the data table, rather than each postal authority, would require updating. Depending on the value-added services being processed, digital data capture scanner and processing computer system **270** communicates mail item file **280** through a public electronic communications network **300** to be ~~stored~~ used by ~~with~~ the first handling postal authority's digital data capture scanner and processing computer system **170** to update mail item file 190. Communications network ~~250~~ **300** may be any conventional communications network, such as the Internet or a cellular/conventional telephonic network, or any combination thereof depending on the type of communication information read from the mark.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 5 as follows:

Digital data capture scanner and processing computer system **170** of first handling postal authority distribution network **105** then determines the address of the original mailer using database **180** and communicates the stored mail item file **190** through use of public electronic communication network ~~250~~ 310 to the mailer's computer systems **10** or a trusted third party repository ~~300~~320. The communication between mailer and the first handling postal authority is maintained confidential such that the final handling or any other postal authority is not provided access to the original mailer's electronic address.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 15, line 19 as follows:

Referring now to **Fig. 3**, a block representation of mail item file ~~300~~ **190** that is created <u>upon initial processing by first handling postal authority distribution network 105</u> ~~, first for delivery to recipient~~, then updated <u>by final handling postal authority distribution network 205</u> and delivered to first handling postal authority distribution network **105** and finally, delivered to the original mailer <u>computer 16</u>. Mail item file ~~300~~ **190** may include: a header **305** of postal information that has been captured from mail item **14**; a mail item identification number **310**; mailer ID **315**; and a list **318** of value-added services requested. The present invention provides for one or more of such requests. Mail item file ~~300~~ **190** further includes various data elements **320** that are optionally captured depending on the value-added services requested. Data elements **320** may include induction time **330** and induction address **332** indicating when and where mail item **14** enters the postal distribution network **100**; intermediate processing times **340**; and intermediate processing addresses **342** indicating various stages of processing within the international postal distribution network **100**, and delivery time **350** and delivery address **352** indicating when and where the mail item leaves the postal distribution network **100**. Data elements **320** may further include information captured when the mark **12** was read, such as a hash value **360** of the contents of mail item **14** and a digital signature and/or certificate **370**.

Amend the paragraph beginning at page 16, line 12 as follows:

Now turning to **Fig. 4** there is shown a flow chart of the process of creating a mail item according to the present invention. At step **400**, the mail item preparation process begins. Address information is retrieved and payment information is computed including the unique mail item identifier (MailItemID) and mailer identifier (MailerID). At step **410**, the process queries as to whether or not the retrieved address is international. If the answer to the query at step **410** is "no," then the process continues to step **420** where the mail item is processed through normal mail finishing. If, however, the answer to the query at step **410** is "yes," then the method continues to step **430**. At step **430**, the process queries

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as to whether or not the mail item requires an electronic confirmation of service. If the answer to the query is "no," then, the process continues to step **420** where the mail item is processed through normal mail finishing. If, however, the answer to the query at step **430** is "yes," then the method continues to step **440** where a mailer electronic address (MEA) is retrieved for service confirmation, such as an e-mail, fax or pager address. At step **450**, a public key (PK) of the postal administration of the first handling is retrieved. At step 460 using an RSA, DSA or an ECDSA algorithm, $[E_{PK}$ [MEA,MailItemID,MailerID]$]$ is computed. E_{PK} [MEA, MailItemID, MailerID],where E stands for operation of encryption, is the result of encryption of ~~date file~~ MEA, MailItemID, and MailerID. PK is a public key of the specially designated private-public key pair of public key cryptographic system of the postal operator of the country of first handling; MEA is Mailer's Electronic Address; MailItemID is a unique identity of the mail item; and MailerID is a unique identity of the mailer. The encryption operator E can be RSA, DSA or ECDSA or any other appropriate reversible type as described, for example, in (many different way are adequately described in *Handbook of Applied Cryptography*, by A. Menezes, P. Van Ooorshot and S. Vanstone, CRC Press, 1997.)